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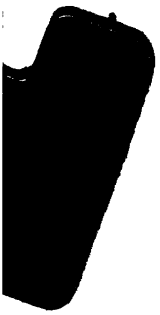
The League of Nations

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Pamphlet No. 13
Series of 1921-1922

The LEAGUE *of* NATIONS: WHAT HAS IT AMOUNTED TO?

ACHIEVEMENTS : SHORTCOMINGS

On the eve of the third annual meeting of the Assembly of the League of Nations, the members of the Foreign Policy Association in common with Americans generally have wanted a disinterested estimate of the League's work to date. In response to many requests the Executive Headquarters which has exceptional sources of information, has prepared this bit of stock-taking. The F. P. A. shares with others the appraisal for what it is worth.

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NEW YORK, SEPTEMBER, 1922

The League of Nations

What It Is

What It Has Done

What It Has Not Done

Why?

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The League of Nations

WHAT IT IS

An aggregate of 51 nations, organized in an attempt to overcome the evils of international anarchy, which were so clearly demonstrated by the Great War, by providing a means for international discussion and cooperation, and for the settlement of international disputes. These nations represent more than four-fifths of the world's population, and nearly three-fourths of its area. The League's membership includes all the countries of the world except Abyssinia, Afghanistan, Ecuador, Germany, Hungary, Iceland, Mexico, Russia, Turkey and the United States.

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A clearing house for the coordination under a single administrative machine of many international activities, such as the regulation of the opium traffic, the suppression of the white slave traffic, and cooperation in international health matters, which results in a greater efficiency, economy and continuity than was possible before the League took these matters over. The League provides what amounts to a "follow up" system in respect to these activities.

A working machine for effecting such measure of international conference and cooperation as is essential to peaceful relations between the nations of the world.

Evidence that this machinery exists and is working lies in the following record:

3 annual Assembly meetings.

19 sessions of the Council.

1 preliminary session of the Permanent Court of International Justice and the first business session, which opened June 15.

3 International Labor Conferences—54 nations represented at third conference.

Brussels Financial Conference—35 nations represented.

Barcelona Transit Conference—43 nations represented.

Geneva White Slave Conference—30 nations represented.

Paris Passport Conference—22 nations represented.

Warsaw Epidemics Conference—27 nations represented.

Numerous commissions set up to deal with special questions, such as the Mandates Commission, the Temporary Mixed Commission for the Reduction of Armaments, the Provisional Health Organization and the Economic and Financial Commission.

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"On this record, only a very bold person can say that the League is a complete success. Only a blind person can say that the League is dead or dying. . . . As a mechanism its form may be far from final; it may need to be readapted by each decade to meet its own needs; but it works. As an institution, it may be weak; but it carries on."—Manley O. Hudson, Professor of International Law at Harvard University, "New Republic," February 1, 1922.

"The League contains within itself the instruments for its own perfecting."—Charles W. Eliot, President Emeritus of Harvard University.

But

"In a League of Nations the question is not one merely of an outer apparatus but one of substituting cooperation for competition in inter-state relations."—Lord Robert Cecil, Delegate for South Africa at the first and second Assembly of the League.

The test of the League of Nations is the extent to which it has been able to do this in the two and half years of its existence.

The League of Nations

WHAT IT HAS DONE

1. **The League has prevented new wars in several of the international disputes referred to it for settlement** by having at hand effective machinery for dealing with them. Of these, four are important:

Aaland Islands dispute between Finland and Sweden.
Polish-Lithuanian dispute over the possession of Vilna.
Disposition of Upper Silesia.
Relations between Albania and Jugoslavia.

Two of these cases, the Aaland Islands and Upper Silesia, the League was able to adjust to the last detail. The Albanian situation, thanks to the League's intervention, was restored from actual hostilities to peace. In the Polish-Lithuanian difficulty the League was able to avert hostilities but failed to bring about a settlement.

2. **The League has organized a World Court,** made up of eleven judges, one of whom, Mr. John Bassett Moore, is an American. The first business session of the Court opened on June 15, 1922. Several cases have already been brought before it, and on July 31 the Court rendered its first decision.

The Permanent Court of International Justice brings to fruition thirty years of effort in the direction of the pacific settlement of international disputes. It is a field of international activity in which the United States has a special interest, since Elihu Root gave the idea of a World Court a new impetus at the Second Hague Conference, and later, as a member of the League's Committee on International Jurists, contributed largely to the moulding of the present Court. The speedy formation of the Court is an illustration of the value of a

permanent international organization, which can follow a project through to its fulfillment instead of letting it lie dormant from one isolated conference to another.

"The World Court is unprecedented in three ways:

1. It is permanent.

2. It is a court of law rather than a body entrusted with powers of negotiation, compromise, or arbitration.

3. No less than 18 nations have agreed to give it compulsory jurisdiction over all disputes that may arise between them.

"This is the longest step ever taken for the pacific settlement of international disputes."—Arthur Sweetser, Chief of the Information Section of the League of Nations.

3. The League has served as an agency for international cooperation in important social and economic questions.

Opium Traffic

The crusade against opium and other drugs, which had been hanging fire since 1912 when an international convention was drawn up at The Hague, was the first pre-war international activity to be taken over and coordinated by the League. A commission was appointed by the Council whose recommendations were approved by two Council meetings and by the Assembly. Two international conferences have been held, and, on the basis of information secured from almost every government in the world except the United States, the Commission has drawn up a complete plan as a basis for united action for the suppression of the traffic.

Health

An international health organization has been established under the League, which is to deal with the improvement and protection of public health throughout the world. Acting through an epidemics commission, it built up a sanitary cordon along the Russian frontier and succeeded in checking the spread of typhus into eastern Europe in 1920. As a result of an international conference in London, the standardization of the antitoxic serums used in pneumonia, diphtheria, syphilis and the like is being undertaken under the auspices of the League. The health section of the League arranged the first all-European conference that has been held since 1914, where Soviet Russia and the Ukraine, ex-enemy powers, allies and neutrals, 27 nations in all, drafted a series of sanitary conventions and prepared a plan, to cost one and one-half million pounds, to free eastern Europe and Russia of typhus. The results of this Conference at Warsaw were approved by the Genoa Conference. In addition, an intelligence service has been organized, which will inform all national health authorities, by means of a monthly bulletin and through other channels, of the occurrence of epidemic diseases all over the world.

White Slave Traffic

Existing agreements for the suppression of the Traffic in Women and Children were considerably strengthened by a series of changes adopted at a conference held in Geneva in June, 1921. The recommendations of the conference have since been embodied in a new convention, which has now 33 signatories instead of the 13 signatories of the old convention. A special advisory commission has been appointed by the Council of the League to keep in touch with the situation.

Cooperation in Humanitarian Tasks

400,000 prisoners of war have been repatriated by Dr. Nansen, working under the League.

800,000 Russian refugees, scattered throughout central and southeastern Europe, are receiving care,—again directed by Dr. Nansen under the League.

Christian women detained in Turkish harems are being sought out and cared for. The second Assembly passed a resolution providing a mixed board which, with a High Commissioner in Constantinople, who is an American, will deal with this work.

Finance

The Brussels Financial Conference, which was held in September, 1920, under the direct auspices of the League, afforded the financial experts of 39 countries an opportunity to examine the economic situation, not as the concern of any isolated nation, but as a world problem. Such questions in the rehabilitation of Europe as the "balancing of budgets," "the stabilization of exchanges," and "the reduction of armament costs," were the subjects of a month's interchange of views by men who were well qualified to discuss them. At this conference the Ter Meulen Scheme for the rehabilitation of bankrupt states was evolved. The initial application of the plan, which was held up, pending the United States' agreement to postpone collection of the $24,000,000 grain credits owed her by Austria, is now ready to be applied. The Czecho-Slovak Government has already agreed to an Austrian loan of $40,000,000 on somewhat the same conditions as the Ter Meulen Scheme, with a provision that certain cases of dispute shall be referred to the League for arbitration.

Communications and Transit

A conference in Paris in 1921 drew up certain recommendations regarding the improvement of passport regulations, the reduction of passport fees, and the simplification of passport and customs procedure, which were re-examined at Genoa and found to be complete. A number of European nations have gradually brought their regulations within compass of the recommendations of this conference.

At the Barcelona Transit Conference in March, 1921, the technical experts of 43 nations drew up a number of agreements dealing with international waterways, ports, railways and transport in general, which practically constitute a new international law for liberty of transit in connection with trade. Several governments have already ratified the agreements, and the Genoa Conference urged the nations

there assembled to do likewise. The work of the conference will be continued through the Advisory and Technical Commission, which will prepare a new international conference in two years.

4. **The League has struck a direct blow at secret diplomacy through its treaty register,** in which all agreements between members of the League must be entered before they can become valid. Over 250 treaties have already been registered, to a number of which the United States is a contracting party. The treaties drawn up at the Washington Conference will have to be registered and published by the League before they become binding on the other powers.

5. **The League has exercised a new and important kind of international administration,** in connection with the execution of the Peace Treaties, which sets valuable precedents for the future.

Saar Valley

Here the claims of German nationality conflicting with France's claims for coal reparations were reconciled by creating a Saar Basin Governing Commission, responsible to the Council of the League, which shall exercise control over the territory for 15 years. At the end of that time the inhabitants shall be given an opportunity to express by plebiscite their final choice between permanent control by the League or union with Germany or France.

Danzig

Here the claims of German nationality conflicting with Poland's economic need for access to the sea were reconciled by restoring Danzig to its old position as a Free City. Not only has the protection of the League been extended to the city, but, with the assistance of the League, a High Commissioner has been appointed, a constitution put into operation, a local government created, and a detailed economic agreement with Poland worked out.

Minorities

The protection of racial and religious minorities, provided for in the Treaties of Peace, is placed under the guarantee of the League of Nations. Any legal differences arising out of these clauses shall be submitted to the Permanent Court of International Justice on the demand of one of the parties to the dispute. As a permanent agency the League can bring the organized protest of the world to bear upon the guilty nations if the treaties are not observed. The League has already succeeded in securing guarantees from both Poland and Austria for the Jewish emigrants from Eastern Galicia into Austria; it has also successfully intervened in the question of the migration of minorities between Greece and Bulgaria.

Mandates

The mandatory powers, who administer the former German and Turkish colonies under the supervision of the League, are responsible to the League. By their annual reports they must prove that they are not exploiting the territorities for their own advantage and that they

are safeguarding the natives from the evils that have accompanied civilization so often in the past. The Permanent Mandates Commission, a body of colonial experts the majority of whom are nationals of non-mandatory powers, must examine these reports, and, in addition, give the Council of the League general advice on the mandates. The terms of the draft mandates under which the mandated territories are administered must have the approval of the Council.

The League of Nations

WHAT IT HAS NOT DONE	WHY
1. **The League of Nations has not attempted to settle difficulties left unsolved, or created, by the Peace Treaties,** such as the Greco-Turkish conflict in Asia Minor or the reparations problem.	1. **The League is not an instrument for the execution of the Peace Treaties,** as is generally believed. Such problems as peace in Asia Minor or the reparation payments were made the business of special agencies—the Supreme Council, the Council of Ambassadors and the Reparation Commission—and can only be undertaken by the League when referred to it, as in the case of Upper Silesia.
2. **The League has not been able to enforce many of its decisions, whether of a political or economic nature,** even though these have been vital to the peace and restoration of Europe.	2. **The League is not a superstate, as has often been stated.** It has no military arm,—and until it has devised the procedure by which its one possible weapon, the economic blockade can be effective, it can find its power only in the force of public opinion and must depend on the will of the states affected for the carrying out of its decisions. It can, therefore, do no more than make recommendations to the governments, even in matters of internal concern having a distinctly international significance,—such as the balancing of budgets.
3. **The League has not been able to face the problems of the world's readjustment** with the force of unified international cooperation behind it.	3. **Three gaps in the membership of the League, Germany, Russia and the United States, make any far-reaching attempts at rehabilitation impossible.** Without Germany and Russia the European membership is so incomplete that the idea of concerted action for the continent as

a whole becomes an anomaly, while the aloofness of the United States has delayed much important international action. Furthermore, the separatism of the European states, seen so clearly in the tariff barriers and transit difficulties, is an indication of the distrust and self-interest that make cooperation a difficult matter.

4. The League has not met the economic situation in Europe in a satisfactory way. Exchanges in central and eastern Europe continue to go from bad to worse, the budgets of the nations fail to balance, tariff and transport difficulties continue, and the money expended on armaments increases, owing to mutual distrust. The League has held financial and transport conferences to discuss these problems in the light of expert knowledge, but the information secured and the recommendations resulting from these gatherings have wrought little improvement.

5. The League has dealt with minor Russian problems, such as the typhus epidemic, investigation of the famine and the care of Russian refugees, but it has not solved the more fundamental problems of Russo-European relations.

6. The League has done little with the disarmament problem. It has appointed a Temporary Mixed Commission for the Reduction of Armaments, which is at work on proposals for the reduction of national armaments and the control of the private manufacture of arms, but little has been accomplished on a ques-

4. The keynote of the economic depression in Europe is the reparation problem. Until the reparation figure can be set at a figure compatible with Germany's ability to pay, the economic restoration of Europe cannot proceed. The Reparation Commission, which is a creature of the Treaty of Versailles and not of the League, must fix this figure. After this preliminary step, and after the major economic difficulties have been referred to it, the League may assume jurisdiction over and responsibility for the economic situation.

5. The absence of Russia from the League is again a contributing cause of failure. Nor has the problem been entrusted to the League. The idea of holding the Genoa Conference (the real object of which proved to be the readjustment of relations between Russia and the rest of Europe) under the League was considered, but was rejected in the hope of inducing the United States to participate.

6. It would be impossible to undertake an extensive scheme for the reduction of armaments without the three powers not represented in the League. Naval disarmament is a matter of concern to the United States. The Russian situation, the fear of Germany felt by some of her neighbors and the generally un-

tion where international cooperation is of the utmost importance.

7. The League has not done away with military alliances and secret diplomacy, although it has given some assistance to open diplomacy by the registration of treaties.

settled condition of Europe continue to be powerful arguments against any large measure of land disarmament.

7. Again the absence of Germany, Russia and the United States from the League is vital. Until the potential military power of these nations is turned to purposes of international cooperation under a society of nations, the necessity for alliances and for maintaining the balance of power will continue.

In the last analysis, the failure of the United States to join the League of Nations has been the principal reason why the League has been unable to undertake any effective, large-scale measure of cooperation. This is particularly disastrous from the point of view of the economic situation. The United States is at present the world's chief creditor. More than half of the world's gold supply is in this country, a fact which has an important bearing on our export and import situation. The reparation problem, as the recent report of the International Bankers Committee shows, cannot be dissociated from the problem of inter-allied indebtedness, which, in turn, depends principally upon the attitude of the United States toward cancellation. Industrial and financial depression in Europe, which are directly reflected in industrial depression and unemployment in this country, are the result of disturbed credit and banking conditions, which can only be settled by the active cooperation of the United States. The United States must eventually join Europe in meeting this situation, whether through separate conferences, such as Genoa or The Hague, or through the League of Nations. The logical body for this purpose is the League, and if the United States were a member, it is inconceivable that these problems would be withheld from its jurisdiction.

The first step in solving this difficulty is to discover why the present Administration refuses to participate in the League of Nations. No statement of the basis upon which the United States would undertake international cooperation in an association of nations, or in the existing League, has as yet come from the State Department. If such a statement could be secured, it is reasonable to believe that the society of nations now functioning at Geneva would be willing to make any changes in its structure and procedure necessary to bring the United States into its membership.

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